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ABSTRACT

A community college teacher of English as a Second Language (ESL) describes her personal experience in transferring teaching techniques learned at the School for International Training (SIT) (Vermont) to her own refugee ESL classes during the required interim year teaching practicum. An introductory chapter gives background information on the author's reasons for attending SIT and the factors that created a learning environment there. The second chapter gives an overview of the home teaching situation. Chapter three examines the benefits of community in creating a learning environment where students are willing to show initiative and take risks, and touches on the benefits of student-generated materials to build community. Chapter four looks at how to encourage initiative and engagement through student input and how to ensure that the class meets their needs. The fifth chapter explores the importance of a classroom atmosphere where students are secure with the materials and feel successful every day, and discusses appropriate classroom techniques. In chapter six, a thematic unit integrating these factors is presented. The final chapter summarizes the teacher's experience. Appendices include student-generated materials, a student survey, and examples for classroom exercises. (MSE)

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STUDENT INITIATIVE AND RISK

Applying My SIT Experience To An ESL Classroom

Patricia A. Kubala

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This project by Patricia A. Kubala is accepted in its present form.

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, the author identifies factors that create an environment where students show initiative and take risks in a language classroom. These factors are based on reflection of her own learning experience in the Summer Masters of Teaching Program at SIT. She discusses her learning from experiments with different classroom practices to create this type of learning environment in a beginning level ESL classroom.

Chapters are included on the benefits of building community and ensuring that a class meets students' needs. Also presented are the benefits of using variety in skills, grouping and language aspects in order to engage students, provide students practice for language mastery and to match teaching with learning. Classroom applications are presented in each chapter.

The paper concludes with a thematic unit that applies all the factors that the author has found important in creating a classroom atmosphere where students show initiative and take risks.

ERIC Descriptors: Student Attitudes, Instructional Materials, Student Developed Materials, Class Activities, Second Language Learning.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

How This Paper Came About—My SIT Experience

One week before the start of fall term, the telephone rang. It was my supervisor, the coordinator of the English as a Second Language Program at Clark Community College in Vancouver, Washington. He hadn't received my qualification statement for one of the nine new adjunct faculty positions with benefits that started the following week. My long pause and questioning "excuse me?" cued him to add that he had sent it to all faculty over the summer.

This was a jolting final notice that I needed to complete a Master's Degree to continue in the position I'd held for four years as adjunct faculty at Clark. The years of tiny currents advocating for fair treatment of part-time faculty had coalesced into a wave of nine adjunct positions with benefits. I didn't know about this welcome development, as I had not taught the optional summer term. I had spent it recharging for the coming year on my parents-in-law's farm in the Hood River Valley, Oregon. Now back in Portland, beginning to prepare for fall classes, I hadn't opened the stack of mail on the table.

The letter stated that appointments would be based on seniority and completion of an MA degree. If I wanted one of these positions, I would have to

commit to completing a Master's degree, preferably within two years. Thus began my sudden search for an MA program.

There was only one MA program within commuting distance of my home in Portland. The mismatch between this program and my interests was depressing. The program was heavily weighted in linguistics and research, with relatively few credit hours in classroom application. After eight years of teaching, I found it hard to be motivated by anything less than direct application of coursework to the realities of a classroom. In addition, the thought of adding four to six years of part-time school onto an already busy schedule of work and raising a three-year-old was not attractive.

When I read the literature from the School of International Training (SIT), recommended by two colleagues, my interest was piqued, however. The goals and objectives of the program hit a chord, especially its focus on bridging the gap between theory and practical application in the classroom. It sounded exciting to study with other experienced teachers from around the world. What capped my decision was that I could complete the coursework in two summers. I judged this to have the least impact on my family, all things considered.

Due to the short timeframe for my decision, I actually knew very little about the program when I arrived in Vermont. Although I had read that the programs at SIT were based on experiential learning, whole person education and learning through community, I had little understanding of what that actually meant. My picture of college from my experience of 25 years ago went something like this: sit in a classroom, listen to a lecture, take notes, study notes, take tests. Little did I know how

much the program would alter this image and change my core beliefs about education.

Based on my lack of understanding of the practices used in teaching the program at SIT, I was totally unprepared for how engaged and alive I felt in the process of learning. Why did I happily sit in my room for hours reading, reflecting, and making connections to my own classroom? Why did I take so much initiative in following my own learning? Why did the time in classes go so quickly? Why was it comfortable to get up, teach, and risk making mistakes in front of my peers? Why did I feel a partnership with the instructors? What factors energized me, created the space for learning, drew me in, allowed me to explore areas that I was interested in? Why did I feel so in charge of my own learning? And the biggest question—am I creating these conditions in my classroom so that my students feel some of the same things?

Because I had experienced these feelings and practices myself (experiential learning), they became known and understood by me in a way that book or lecture learning could never reach. I knew these experiences would form the basis of my core beliefs about what learning could be and about the conditions that promote learning.

Factors that created this learning environment for me were, first of all, the learning community that we built. It was a safe and accepting community where we learned much from each other. I felt safe taking risks and making mistakes. Another factor for me was how applicable the learning was to my personal interests and goals. I was learning things I wanted to know. I was always encouraged to apply things we

were learning to my own teaching situation, and to connect new learning to what I already knew.

My work during the Interim Year Teaching Practicum (IYTP, which came between the two summers of coursework) and since, has been to experiment with creating this type of learning environment in my beginning ESL refugee class. While a classroom of adult refugees learning English as a second language isn't the same as a group of experienced teachers learning to improve their teaching, the factors that make a learning environment that encourages initiative and risk are the same.

This paper summarizes my learning both as a student at SIT and as a teacher experimenting with teaching practices during the IYTP. Chapter 2 summarizes information on the context of my teaching situation, the students, the school, the opportunities and constraints. Chapter 3 examines the benefits of community in creating a learning environment where students are willing to show initiative and take risks. It also discusses the use of student-generated materials to build community as well as create engagement and initiative. Chapter 4 discusses encouraging initiative and engagement through student input and ensuring that the class meets their needs. Chapter 5 examines the importance of a classroom atmosphere where students are secure with the material and feel successful each day. This translates into classroom practices where lessons are structured step-by-step and students are given the practice to master each step. It discusses the benefits of using variety (in skills, language aspects and grouping) as a tool in the classroom to provide the needed practice while keeping the students engaged. In Chapter 6, a thematic unit is presented which

integrates the factors that I have found important in creating a classroom environment that encourages students to show initiative and take risks. Chapter 7 provides a summary of my learning.

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CHAPTER 2

THE TEACHING CONTEXT

My Students

My students are refugees from other countries, fleeing religious or political persecution, wars, or economic deprivation. They have left their homes, friends and, often, family behind to start over again at an age when many of us would not choose to take on such a task. They bring a rich variety of cultures, languages, and life experiences with them. But the majority come into this country with little English language and are faced with the task of adjusting to a different culture. There are different customs and rules for the simplest everyday social situations, not to mention the greater differences in work, school and family environments

One of the hardest issues for my adult students is the barriers to finding good jobs to support their families. While many of them were skilled trade or professional workers in their native country, they are blocked from these jobs here by the language barrier and differences in technology. They usually must start with unskilled, often minimum-wage jobs that do not pay enough to support a family.

These days, refugees in the U.S. receive less help from the federal government in their adjustment and transition to this country. When I began my work with refugee populations in 1988, the federal government provided monetary and social

services support for eighteen months. During this time, refugees received language instruction and could enter job-training programs. However, due to budget cuts and federal and state welfare reforms, this support has been repeatedly cut. Today it stands at eight months, after which students must work as part of the Work First program. A favorable feature of this program at this time is that students with limited English may be able to blend part-time work with continued language study.

In spite of these issues and problems, I find my students remain hopeful for a better life in this country. For my older students, their hopes lie with their children and grandchildren. As a group, they are motivated to learn, as they know well that English is the key to better jobs, training and educational opportunities.

Some of them tell me their lives are already better. One Russian student is happy to get a paycheck for his work—his friend in Russia hasn't been paid in months. A Vietnamese student says he survived five years in a "re-education" camp where he was held because of his association with the South Vietnamese army. His wife, a nurse, was forced out into the countryside to be a farmer after Saigon fell. A student from Mexico City says that, as a taxi driver, he had no money left after paying rent and food.

As a teacher, I am committed to smoothing their road to learning English in whatever way I can. My goal is to teach them what will help them now and also to provide the foundation for success in their continued studies. I am committed to creating a classroom environment where they feel safe, accepted, successful, and encouraged to take initiative and risk. I want them to be engaged and have fun. This

paper is about my learning as I experimented with different practices to create this type of classroom.

The Class

The class that I describe and write about in this paper is a beginning level ESL class of 25 students, which meets twelve hours a week. The nationalities of the refugees coming into the Portland/Vancouver area vary over time. At this time, the nationalities of the students in my class include about 90% from the former Soviet Union (Ukraine, Georgia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan) and the other 10% is a mix from Vietnam, Mexico, and Bosnia. The ages of the students in my class range from about 22 to 70. They have usually been in the United States for a year or less, and have usually studied English for one quarter (10 weeks) before entering my class.

Among the classroom challenges for me are the different learning styles and learning rates of students in their twenties versus those in their sixties. The educational level of these students can vary from basic schooling in their first language to attendance at a post-secondary technical school or college. A part of the work during my practicum was focused on this challenge. Using variety as a tool to help address this issue is discussed in Chapter 5.

The students in my classes are busy people. Combined with studying English twelve or more classroom hours a week, my students must meet the parental responsibilities of their often large families. During their first eight months in the country, they have numerous medical, dental, job-interview and social service

appointments that pull them out of class. In addition, probably one-quarter of the class is already working full time, often at jobs with second or third-shift hours.

My students often have many stresses in their lives. They have the time pressures of combining work, family and school. Cultural adjustment and lack of language can lead to periods of culture shock. Unemployment and under-employment issues can affect their self- esteem. These factors impact my classroom by affecting the students' readiness to learn.

Materials are also a classroom challenge. The ESL staff has calculated that the supplies, goods and services budget provided by the college works out to be about three dollars per student per term. There is a class set of grammar textbooks that I find useful. However, this is only one aspect of necessary study and these books keep disappearing. In my classroom, we build our "textbooks" in three-ring notebooks with the topics we study, the activities we complete and notes that students take.

ESL classes in Washington State are required to meet the Washington State Competencies. The competencies are based on developing necessary life and vocational skills. An example of requirements for a beginning level class is included in Appendix 1. The competencies are general enough that they can be met through a range of topics and methods. The progressive supervisor of the Clark College ESL program gives his instructors freedom to develop their own curriculum to meet the competencies.

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CHAPTER 3

BUILD A LEARNING COMMUNITY

An important aspect of the classroom environment at SIT that I found so motivating was the learning community we built. Certainly, the need to build a safe, comfortable atmosphere in a classroom is not a new practice to me. Lowering the affective stress of students is a key consideration in any language learning situation. However, my participation in a learning community of 21 fellow teachers at SIT greatly broadened my understanding of the benefits of learning in community.

What was it about the community that promoted my learning? There was as much emphasis on working with and learning from my peers as from the teacher or a book. We weren't looked upon as "empty slates," but were valued as whole people who came with knowledge and experience. I learned from others and others learned from me. This immediately took the emphasis off looking to the teacher for all the answers and shifted the initiative to ourselves for our learning. The classroom focus shifted from teacher-student to student-student interactions encouraging all students to become more independent learners.

Another advantage of the community that enhanced the learning environment was the acceptance, respect and support I felt from the group. We were all learning together; no one had all the answers. We were all bringing knowledge and experience in different areas. The acceptance and respect of the group allowed me to

let more of myself out. There was much less risk to my ego, so I was willing to participate more. I felt comfortable sharing my teaching, ideas and experience in class and asking questions. It was a place where I could take risks and make mistakes.

The third benefit I found was the increased confidence that learning in community brought. Being an accepted member of a group with knowledge and ideas to contribute is a strong self-esteem builder. When I first arrived at SIT, I was insecure about my teaching, similar to how most students feel about their ability to speak a language. But, my confidence grew as I felt accepted, respected and supported by the group.

My experience of the advantages of learning in community is summed up in a response I wrote to my instructor on learning Swahili: (At SIT, each teacher in the Master's degree program studies a new language in order to view different teaching approaches and practices from the eyes of a learner.)

> *"One way others affected my learning was the support and help they so willingly gave me. I can't emphasize enough how much the atmosphere of the class enhanced my learning. It is a place where I can experiment, make mistakes and ask others for help. Relying on other learners this much is new to me, but I am struck by how much I learn this way."*

Based on my experience of the benefits of learning in community, I have experimented with different classroom practices to build a stronger community. These practices break down into the three areas of 1) building the foundation, 2) group process and 3) use of student-generated material.

Building the Foundation

In order to build a foundation, I include more community building activities in the first week or two of class. When I enter class on the first day, the students are sitting in separate family and ethnic groups. However, they are soon sitting in a circle playing a ball toss memory game where they share information about themselves and must remember the same information about their classmates. Later, standing in two lines (one stationary, one moving) across from each other, they meet many of their classmates and ask questions to get to know them.

A different day, they interview another student and present them to their small group. Afterwards, I take a picture of the small group and the students make a poster with basic information about each person to hang on the classroom walls.

Later in the week, I have experimented with group-created names for each student. The names are made with an adjective starting with the same letter as their first name, such as Hungry Hong or Intelligent Ivan. Some of these names stick through the whole quarter! I have also had good success with some of the silent activities we used at SIT to build our community. These include asking students to form a line from west (starting at Vancouver) to east based on their city and country of origin, or to form a line by birthdays. By the end of the first week, students have done some crazy exercises together, shared information about their families and interests and met many different classmates.

Another way I lay the foundation is to tell them in the first week what they can expect in my class. They soon learn that they will be working with different people and in different groups throughout the term. They will get to know their classmates. I tell them that there are 25 of them and only one of me. They are each bringing different knowledge of English and so they can work together and help each other. Mistakes are OK in this class. It means you are experimenting and learning. I look for opportunities throughout the term to reinforce these expectations through my actions and behaviors. These may include things as simple as making sure the members of the newly formed groups know each other's name, asking other groups to help with an answer before I help, or matter-of-factly rephrasing an attempted answer in correct English.

Group Process

Once the foundation is built, the group process helps to build and maintain the community over time. In my class, the students are working directly with the language in pairs or small groups a significant amount of the time. Before SIT, when I had students work together in pairs and small groups, my reasons focused on the practice students gained. As I became conscious of the benefits of learning in community, my view broadened. My experience as a learner working in small groups in Swahili class helped me.

Even as a beginner in Swahili, I bring different knowledge of the language than other students. I do get practice using the pattern. But when my group works

together on personalizing a pattern, I hear how to say different sentences I wouldn't have thought of. I get a supportive check of my attempts. I get to know my classmates better and feel more comfortable in class. Our combined knowledge helps me to figure out how to say something I want to in the language. We are supporting each other's learning. We are moving towards taking responsibility for our own learning.

Student-generated Material

A major strategy that I have incorporated to build and maintain community throughout the quarter is the sharing of student-generated material. Over the weeks, students share information about themselves and their lives through various activities. They continue to get to know each other and build bonds. Through sharing, students come to know each other as whole people with families, ideas, personalities and different life experiences. Knowledge, empathy and friendships build among the students while affective stresses decrease. There is much less risk in experimenting and making mistakes among a group of known, supportive classmates.

At the beginning of the Interim Year Teaching Practicum (IYTP), I had a narrow definition of student-generated material as being only student produced stories or more specifically, life stories. Through discussions during my advisor's visit and with peers in my on-line journal, I broadened my definition. I now see it as any language the students produce that isn't in a book or that the teacher hasn't given them to say. It can be as simple as filling in the structure "I always _____ " or as complicated (for beginning students) as describing a favorite place from childhood.

As well as helping to build community, use of student-generated material has other important interrelated benefits. It creates engagement on the part of students, promotes initiative and willingness to risk. In my participation in a wide range of language learning activities at SIT, it was the ones that I could put myself into that brought out the most engagement and initiative on my part. After completing writing activities in class based on a film clip from *The Graduate* (love letter from Ben to Elaine and Ben's imagined dream), I wrote the following in a summary paper to my instructor:

> ***"The experiential activities in class really made me understand how putting one's self into the piece creates student initiative, engagement and willingness to risk. I became engaged in writing the love letter as soon as I decided to express <u>my</u> values on love. In the same way with the dream activity, I was telling the story of the confusion of my generation. I wove in my personal story of growing up in a working class neighborhood and then marrying into a wealthier family. There's so much of me in that short piece. I became so invested in this writing. I spent a lot of time on it, coming back to it several times to get just the right words to express my meaning."***

Because of the community building, engagement and initiative benefits of student- generated material, I now incorporate activities throughout the term where students talk or write about themselves, their families and lives. In my beginning level class, my curriculum starts with simple sentence level activities at the beginning of a unit and builds to more complex stories at the end of the unit after the foundation has been built.

For example, I have used a unit where my students work towards being able to compare themselves and a favorite family member. They compare their similarities

and differences in physical appearance, personality and interests. Building the steps along the way over a couple of weeks, we have lessons in describing daily routines, likes and dislikes as well as people's looks and personalities. In each step, after learning basic vocabulary, students personalize the language and share information about themselves and their lives in small groups. Appendix 2A includes an example of student-generated sentences from this unit. (In this case, I have made them into worksheets for grammar practice at home.) Reporting to my advisor at the end of the interim-year practicum I wrote:

> ***"These (simple sentence-level) activities always sparked interest and engagement when students were talking about themselves, their thoughts and lives."***

At the end of a unit, after we had built up the pieces of language needed, I had great success with student engagement, initiative and community building with both process writing and the Islamabad technique. (See Appendix 2)

Process Writing

Before studying process writing and other writing techniques at SIT, I often had my students work with reading exercises on a story and then write a similar story about themselves on the same topic. After one writing session, I collected and corrected their paragraphs. In too many of the cases, the students' writing followed the model closely and I didn't see the kind of initiative that I wanted. What a difference changing to an adaptation of process writing has made in the initiative that students show, and in the interesting material that is created for sharing as well.

Process writing is a writing technique that includes brainstorming, a discovery draft and a final draft. Students work in pairs at various stages to help the writer clarify his/her message. The emphasis of the process in the drafting stages is on the audience and the content, not on form (grammar). Appendix 2B shows the steps of process writing as presented to me in the Four Skills class at SIT.

Reflecting on the experiential activities in class from a learner's perspective helped me understand the benefits of the process itself. As I wrote to my instructor,

> ***"I found working through the process with a partner very valuable. I got new ideas, added more details, and got clear on whether I had communicated the ideas I wanted. Free-writing really worked to get my ideas out. I can see these benefits would apply to beginning students working in a second language. But even more importantly, I see the benefit of time to develop their ideas, the opportunity to build vocabulary to express these ideas and focus on content not form. With my students, if I continue to emphasize correction, they will continue to emphasize form. They will take fewer risks and follow any model paragraph closely."***

With my beginning class, I had to adapt the process. Not speaking their native languages, I have been unsuccessful in getting them to understand the task of giving feedback on the clearness and completeness of the content. Instead I perform that task, reviewing their draft and asking questions where I don't understand, or information is not complete. Using a technique demonstrated by Vivian Zamel (Professor of English at the University of Massachusetts, Boston) in a workshop at SIT in July, 1997, I also comment on the content of the draft as an interested reader.

To focus on form, I often pull out common errors made in students' drafts and develop exercises to work on these points. Then, in pairs, students use a checklist to

edit their final draft. The steps of the writing process as I have adapted it are included in Appendix 2C.

The key components of the process that I have found important in promoting initiative, risk and community are (1) the time to develop students' ideas and vocabulary, (2) emphasis on the content in the draft stages and (3) sharing (publishing) their story with others in the class. Appendix 2D includes a sample of students' writing using this process.

Islamabad Technique

I was first introduced to the Islamabad technique, originated by Earl Stevick, at the Sandanona conference. Sandanona is the annual conference put on by teachers finishing their second summer of course work at SIT. The technique involves a student telling about a place that only he knows, using Cuisinaire rods to "build" the story. Other students are listeners and afterwards retell the parts of the story they remember. It's a wonderful technique to build confidence in the storyteller—he's the expert and the listeners validate him through their interest in remembering the story and later asking questions. I have found that sharing stories is a powerful community builder in the classroom. The steps of the process as I have adapted it are shown in Appendix 2E. Further information on applying the technique in the classroom is also included in this appendix.

I remember being spellbound at the Sandanona conference by the description of a favorite childhood place by the Japanese wife of a fellow student. I felt privileged

to share this knowledge of part of her life. When it was my turn, I was bursting to share a place that I associate with many happy memories. I felt so validated by the interest shown and questions asked. The participants were truly interested in knowing about this part of my life. Sharing our stories built bonds between us.

Some teachers use the technique throughout a class, with some students speaking each week. For my particular class of 25 beginning students, where we must build the language step-by-step to make the technique doable, I have used it together with process writing.

I start the activity by sharing a place with my students using the full Islamabad process. This builds community between us, demonstrates the process and gives a model of sharing not only a physical description, but also the feelings and meaning evoked by the place. We follow the entire process again with a student (who has previously volunteered) who tells his/her story.

After this, students break into pairs with partners they don't know as well as others, and they tell and build their story for each other. It's a great sight to see their animated faces as they exchange their stories. As I cannot be there to "understand" their story by rephrasing with correct English, I often use the oral telling as brainstorming for process writing. Through the adapted process, students can develop their story, learn more vocabulary to express their thoughts and have a chance to focus on accuracy.

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CHAPTER 4

GET ENGAGEMENT FROM THE START

In the SIT program, I was learning what I wanted to know. How applicable the learning was for my personal interests and goals was an important contributing factor to how engaged I felt.

During the first week of the program, each SIT student set several academic and personal goals that we wanted to achieve during the summer. We listed some specific steps we could take to achieve each of them. This process helped me focus and become clear about what I wanted to take away from the program. My advisor encouraged me to skim or skip readings in other areas, if necessary, in order to meet my goals. The initiative and responsibility for learning was clearly on me. I found this feeling of directing my own learning very motivating and energizing. What a positive difference in the learning environment it made for me.

Each student also had a voice in what happened throughout the course through regular teacher requests for our feedback. What message did our instructor's request for feedback give us? It told us that our thoughts mattered, that the class was for us, and the instructors were there to serve our learning. The initiative was with us to guide the teacher in helping our learning.

Student Input into Curriculum

Applying these concepts to my classroom, I ask students at the start of each term for input into what they want to study. I collect background information on their present situation and the immediate needs they have for using English. Included are questions about where they are presently having problems. One version of this initial survey is shown in Appendix 3. I encourage students to use their native language if they have trouble finding the words in English. I tap my former students, now in higher level classes, for help in translation.

Based on the surveys each term, I put a list of possible topics we could study on butcher paper and hang them around the room. I also include skill areas such as listening, speaking, pronunciation, reading and writing on a separate sheet to get an indication where they would like the emphasis of the class to be. Each student is given a number of colored dots to put next to their interests. In this visible way, they get to provide input and see the response of the rest of the class.

In the half year since I have started to use this survey, students' input has led me to develop a new unit on the use of telephones/answering machines and to recognize a need for a unit on parent/school conferences. The students have real needs in these areas and are motivated to learn.

Feedback on the Class

Throughout the term, I ask students for feedback to help me adjust the class for them. This can take the form of oral or written feedback with such questions as:

What did you learn this week?

What helped you? (in class and out)

What didn't help?

Were the lessons too fast? OK? too slow?

Was the English too difficult? OK? too easy?

How was class for you this week?

Tell me about one time that your partner/table helped you this week?

They are encouraged to write in their native language if they can't find the words in English. During oral feedback, if there is a problem in understanding, other students can usually translate to get the meaning across.

In my beginning class, I usually start with written feedback the first time as an introduction. I show a visual representation of each major activity that we have completed and assign a name to it (e.g. card game, tell story in pairs, picture-sentence match). Students are then easily able to list which activities helped or didn't help them. Students soon learn the names of different types of activities, making oral feedback easier.

As I have a large class, I have experimented with oral feedback during the last 20-25 minutes of class every two weeks. Students sit in a circle and take turns speaking. To my surprise, a student rarely passes on his/her turn. Everyone wants to speak. I get valuable input that I can use with my own ongoing assessment of the class. As a direct result of student input, I have adjusted classes in such ways as adding more listening comprehension and dictation exercises for one class that felt

weak in these skills. For another class, I added more practice with simple job interviews.

In addition to the useful content of the feedback, asking for regular feedback contributes to a classroom environment that encourages students to take initiative for their own learning, not to mention building community.

Starting Where the Students Are

In addition to classroom changes in student input and feedback, I'm also doing a better job of "starting where the students are" in a topic area. An underlying principle of the Silent Way approach to teaching languages (Gattegno, 1976) is to "grant students what they know." My students come from different classes, teachers and backgrounds and therefore, start my class with different knowledge of English. I now give a grammar pre-test at the start of the term so I can determine what students know and what they need practice with. At the start of every term, I find one or two students who have already mastered the content of my class and can move to the next level.

I have added more pre-tests in life-skill units to find out what students already know so that I can start from there. For example, in a health unit, I give a matching exercise on common ailments and body parts to see what students already know. I also determine what is new vocabulary for students as I go through each unit and make sure to add enough new material to serve the learning of all students.

At first, I found that tailoring the class to the specific students involved a lot of materials preparation. I needed to make new materials such as concentration games and game boards specific to the vocabulary that the students were learning. Comments appeared in my journal such as:

> *"It was more work to make my own stick figure drawings, make 6 copies of a new concentration game, make a new game board. So much easier to use my already prepared materials. But looking back, it made a real difference in how I felt and was worth the time. I knew that what I was teaching this week was useful to my students. Thinking about it, it would add a lot to student engagement/initiative to have old material reviewed, but to be working on new material. I find I'm starting to build "starting where the students are" into my units."*

Reflecting on these comments now, I can see I had to prepare more because my old materials didn't really reflect the range of levels where my students were. Over time, I have built materials with a range of difficulty that I can easily mix and match with different classes. Once my materials reflected both the lower and higher range of students in beginning classes, I found I have used them again and again.

The changes I have made in my classroom have benefits for me as well as my students. It feels good to know I'm teaching them subjects that they want to learn and that will be useful to them. The rewards have been numerous. They include Elena, my 28-year-old Georgian student, who after the health unit came in and proudly told me:

> *"Yesterday I take my son to doctor. No translator. I understand doctor. I can do."*

Another 36-year-old student from Armenia had to rush his son to the emergency room at night when no translator was available. He told me the next day with a look of surprise on his face:

> *"I understand what doctor tell me. I can speak to doctor. Doctor can understand."*

CHAPTER 5

DOING MORE WITH LESS—THE KEY IS VARIETY

During the IYTP, I found safety and comfort with the material to be important factors in promoting initiative and risk taking in the classroom. Not only do students need a safe and supportive atmosphere with their classmates and teacher, they need to feel safe with the material. This contributes to students feeling comfortable enough to show initiative and take risks. My supervisor summarized it this way in his response to one of my classroom activities in my on-line journal:

> ***"I'm struck that initiative comes out of safety/comfort for many people. It seems that the picture stories are familiar to your students and they feel good about the language they are using in the activity. Out of this, they can feel free to experiment with a creative computer (making student-generated sentences by combining parts of sentences in the picture story) and take lots of initiative. In teaching students how to take initiative, it's important to check to see if we are asking them to work from a place that has sufficient comfort/safety."***

Activities need to be doable and students need to feel successful each day. This translates into classroom practices where lessons are structured step-by-step and students are given the practice to master each step. As so clearly stated in *The Self-Directed Teacher* (Nunan and Lamb 1996), the teacher must start with clear objectives. What do I want the students to be able to do at the end of this? As their teacher, I must provide clear building blocks that lead the students there. I must

provide enough practice to allow the students to control and internalize the steps along the way.

But how do I provide enough practice without losing the engagement of the students? All classes have students of different abilities, learning styles and rates of learning. So how can a teacher help less advanced students keep up while keeping the more advanced students engaged?

Benefits of Using Variety in a Lesson

During the quarter of my supervisor's IYTP visit, I had a particularly wide range of abilities in my classroom. The more advanced students included several students such as 24-year-old Nadezhda, whose grammar pre-test showed she had mastered the grammar areas that I would be teaching that term. However, she had low speaking and listening comprehension skills and little confidence. The lower level students included several students such as Lida, a 63-year-old woman who had low literacy skills and learned slowly.

My supervisor suggested that I try to work with a greater level of variety in my lessons. Variety, as used by my supervisor, is the frequent changing of how the students work with a set of language. Providing variety in a lesson can include mixing the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), varying student groupings, and working with different aspects of the language (pronunciation, grammar, spelling). I started to learn how using variety when working with a chunk of language could provide the practice necessary, while keeping the students

engaged. I worked with various aspects of variety for the rest of the interim year and again in the Four Skills course the following summer. Through my work, I came to three conclusions on the benefits of variety within a lesson.

Keeps Students Engaged

First, variety functions to keep the classroom energy level up and the students engaged. Along with studying topics of interest to students, working consciously with variety can do much to keep students' attention. Attention is a necessary condition for learning to take place.

Variety can be included in a lesson at several different levels. On one level, it involves mixing the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. The same competency and set of language is worked on, but through different learning channels requiring different skills. For beginning students, unscrambling sentences requires skills in problem-solving, word order, reading and the use of articles and prepositions. This is very different from the skills involved in an oral cloze of a picture story from an overhead. The language is the same, but calling on different skills for each activity keeps the students engaged. Besides engaging students, a vital corollary benefit of mixing the four skills is that students have opportunities to learn language in multiple ways, addressing diverse learning styles.

On another level, variety can be provided by working with different aspects of the chunk of language such as pronunciation or grammar. These short change-of-pace lessons provide a different type of variety and work to keep the energy level of

the classroom up. Some of the needs that often came out of my students' ongoing feedback were grammar, pronunciation, stress and intonation, or spelling.

A third type of variety is the use of different groupings of students in various parts of the lesson. By varying between whole class, small group, pair and individual tasks, I found another tool to keep students' engagement.

Provides Practice to Master Language

Along with keeping students' attention, a second key benefit of providing all of these levels of variety is that students get the necessary opportunities to internalize the language.

Before I worked in my classroom with these concepts, I knew that my students needed practice with a chunk of language over a period of days. However, somewhere underneath, I wondered if I wasn't boring the more advanced students. This ongoing question affected the confidence I felt as a teacher. However, I was determined not to leave the lower level students behind.

During his visit, my supervisor cautioned me that students will only be bored when they have mastered the language. Before this point, they will stay engaged as long as the activities are varied. My experience as a language learner at SIT helped me understand this idea.

I remembered my experience in learning Swahili. As a beginner, I couldn't get enough practice. We were learning a set of ten or twelve commands such as stand up, sit down, read, write, dance and sing through a Total Physical Response (TPR)

activity. We had several opportunities to listen and respond to the commands over a series of three days. On the third day, we played a picture-word matching game. When the instructor stopped the game after 15 minutes, I was still engaged and not ready to stop. I couldn't get enough practice. After a series of activities over a period of three days, I still hadn't mastered the material and I wanted more practice. In a paper on myself as a learner of Swahili I wrote:

> *"Even though we practiced and practiced in class, I never got enough and stayed engaged throughout."*

My instructor sagely responded:

> *"This one fact is probably one of the most important things we can remember as teachers. Teachers so often fear boring their students that we skip right over practice. But as long as mastery hasn't been achieved, practice is never boring, that is, unless the "how" never varies. The trick is to vary the how and not the what."*

I got more of a learner's perspective from experiential activities in my Four Skills class. After participating in several language learning activities I wrote:

> *"I confirmed again how effective it is to recycle the same language in different activities using different groupings. The first activity was undoable for me until I engaged the help of a higher-level student (pair work). However, I felt success in the second activity describing the church because it recycled the same vocabulary. In my classroom, I work with the same chunk of language in a variety of ways and a variety of groupings. This activity helped me to understand from a learner's perspective why the variety I use works in a class with a wide range of abilities."*

Through my work with variety during the interim year practicum, I became confident that if I circulate and watch my students carefully, I will know when the work/language becomes boring. I watch how fast they're working, how accurate their

work is, the energy in the classroom, and their body language. And if I'm not sure how to interpret some feedback, I check in orally with the students. These practices replace switching topics or activities based on my fears, or because I am bored, not because they are. I have arrived at the point my instructor predicted when she responded to my first paper the first summer:

> *"I think as you become more observant you won't need simply to "believe" that you are not boring them—you will be able to see and draw your conclusions based on data rather than belief."*

Matches Teaching with Learning

The third benefit I began to see after working with variety over a period of time was how it allowed me to match different activities to different groups of learners. I noticed which activities the higher level students in the class did quickly and which took more time with more errors. Which activities could the less advanced students complete on their own; which did they need to be paired with more advanced students? Which activities did all students find more challenging, such as listening comprehension and dictation activities (in their weaker skill areas)? I started thinking about which skills each activity required of students and how that related to its difficulty. Who did this activity engage?

If I have a variety of activities working with the same chunk of language, and an idea of what they require of students, I have a better chance of matching my teaching with their learning. If less advanced students are confused, I can provide practice with a very doable exercise. For my particular students, this could be a

reading/matching activity. If the higher level students are moving toward mastery, but the lower level students need more practice, I may use an exercise that I know engages them all, such as a listening comprehension exercise. If I had planned to move on, but ongoing feedback tells me more practice is needed, I have other activities I can move to, using the same language.

To give my readers a more concrete example of how the benefits of variety can operate in a classroom, I am including an excerpt from my on-line journal in Appendix 4A. This excerpt shows my learning process as I worked with my advisor, Jack Millett, during the IYTP on providing the necessary practice for my mixed level students while keeping them engaged.

In addition, Appendix 4B includes an example of the possibilities for variety in presenting and practicing a chunk of language—a picture story. It includes activities in listening, speaking, reading and writing with a range of difficulty. Similar activities can be developed for any chunk of language. Having a variety of possible activities and an idea of what they require of students allows one to better match teaching to the learning of the students.

CHAPTER 6

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

This chapter presents a thematic life-skill unit which integrates the factors I have found important in creating a classroom environment that encourages initiative and risk taking.

The unit encourages the building and maintenance of community through pair and group work where students are learning from and supporting each other. Students start with controlled sentence-level activities at the beginning of the unit and share student produced material about themselves, their thoughts and lives. As the foundation is built, students share a piece of themselves in less controlled activities.

This thematic unit on housing is based on input from my students that they have English language needs in finding and renting housing. I have included steps to find out what the students already know and to start from there.

Variety permeates the individual lessons as well as appearing across the unit. The foundation leading to the final activities is built step-by-step. Variety in activities, skills, language aspects and grouping is used to keep students engaged as they practice to control and internalize each step.

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Thematic Unit — Housing

These lesson plans form a thematic life-skill unit on housing. The objectives of the unit are that students will be able to:

- Identify common items in a house,
- Describe location of items in a room of the house,
- Read and interpret housing ads, and
- Understand vocabulary and ask questions necessary to find and rent an apartment/house.

After this foundation, the unit focuses on reading and writing skills with student-generated stories. The objectives of the reading and writing activities are:

- To build and maintain community in the classroom,
- For students to learn cultural and background information about each other,
- For students to be able to write a short passage in past tense about a special place including a description of that place,
- For students to be able to read and construct the meaning of an unfamiliar text, first at global level, then for detail, and
- For students to work collaboratively to increase and expand their understanding of the text.

The grammar focus of the unit is the "there is/are" structure and prepositions of location. In addition, this unit is done in conjunction with a unit on past tense.

Activity	Rationale
DAY 1	
1. Chat with students. In what kind of housing do they live in Vancouver (apartment, duplex, house)? Who helped them find it? How many bedrooms, bathrooms does it have? Small/large kitchen? A dining room? Skills: Listening/Speaking (10 min) Grouping: Whole Class	Introduce unit. Recycle housing vocabulary from last quarter.
2. Hand out picture of living room and bedroom with vocabulary of common items listed at the bottom. Students match number of item in picture with word. Elicit new vocabulary, put on cards and place in pocket chart. Skills: Reading/Speaking/Listening (20 min) Grouping: Individual/Pair Materials: Pictures of living room and bedroom	Start where students are. Use as pre-test to see what is new vocabulary for students. Picture provides graphic for home study. Cards in pocket chart bring attention to new vocabulary and peripheral learning.
3. Concentration game—Put separate cards of words and pictures face down in rows. Students take turns turning over 2 cards. The object is to match picture of item and word. (Students must say a word every time a card or picture is turned over.) Skills: Reading/Speaking/Listening) (20 min) Grouping: Small groups of 3 Materials: 8 sets of cards	Practice with new vocabulary. Group process.
4.Collect pronunciation problems during concentration game, and afterwards do mini-pronunciation lesson. Give hints by writing how it sounds. Students practice in pairs. Skills: Listening/Speaking (10 min) Grouping: Whole group/pairs	Focus on sounds of the language—raise awareness. Provides variety by focusing on different aspect of language.

Activity	Rationale
5. A large floor plan (blank) is taped to the board. Teacher arranges large pictures of furniture in the bedroom. Elicit a description of the room. (There's a dresser against the wall, between the windows.) Put new prepositions on cards in the pocket chart. Rearrange and give practice with new prepositions. Rearrange again and have pairs of students write sentences on the board. Correct together. Hand out written sheet with model sentences. Skills: Listening/Speaking/Reading/Writing (20 min) Grouping: Whole group/Pairs Materials: Large floor plan, pictures of furniture with "stick it" on back, pocket chart cards.	Introduce and practice new vocabulary. Students practice describing location of furniture. Accuracy.
6. In pairs, one student uses rods to tell the arrangement of his bedroom. The other retells, then they switch. Skills: Listening/Speaking (20 min) Grouping: Pairs Materials: Rods	Each student practices describing rooms of the house. Group process and sharing of sentence-level student produced information.
7. Students make a drawing and write a description of their living room. Finish for homework. Post pictures and descriptions on the classroom bulletin board. Skills: Writing (15 min) Grouping: Individual	Writing provides another channel to build structure from bottom up. Practice spelling. Student-generated material.
DAY 2	
1. Warm up–Game of Pictionary to review new housing vocabulary. Skills: Reading/Speaking (20 min) Grouping: 2 teams	Recycle new vocabulary. Put image with word.

Activity	Rationale
2. Half of students get written description of bedroom, others get living room. Students read and draw picture of room. Then students use their reading and picture for an information gap activity. Students sit back to back. One reads written description, other listens and draws. Pair checks their pictures. Switch. Offer use of the human computer* for pronunciation practice first. Skills: Reading/Listening/Speaking (35 min) Groupings: Pairs Materials: 2 written descriptions of rooms, floor plans (blank)	Provides good assessment tool of where students are towards competencies. Practice new vocabulary and structures. Uses variety of skills.
*The human computer is pronunciation practice. The procedure is for a student to raise his hand. The teacher comes and stands behind the student. The student says the word or sentence in question. The teacher pronounces the word/sentence as a native speaker. The student listens carefully and makes his pronunciation as close to native pronunciation as he can. The process continues as above until the student is satisfied and stops.	
3. Hand out pictures of kitchen and bathroom with vocabulary of common items listed at the bottom. Students match number of item in picture with word. Elicit new vocabulary, put on cards and place in pocket chart. Skills: Reading/Speaking/Listening (40min) Grouping: Individual/Pair Materials: Pictures of kitchen and bathroom	Use as pre-test to see what is new vocabulary for students. Picture provides graphic for home study.
4. Draw a picture of your dream kitchen. Label the items. Share your picture with students at your table. Skills: Writing/Reading/Listening/Speaking (30 min) Grouping: Groups of 4 Materials: Drawing paper	Associate vocabulary with image. Build community through sharing.

Activity	Rationale
5. Homework: Students complete worksheet with picture of bathroom and objects. They answer "Is there" and "Are there" questions about picture. Skills: Reading/Writing Grouping: Individual Materials: Worksheet	Provide another channel for recycling grammar, vocabulary and prepositions.
DAY 3	
1. Warm up game—Large floor plan of house on board. Student from one team picks word, then finds appropriate picture (emphasize kitchen/bathroom) and puts it in appropriate room. If one team misses, other team gets a chance. Skills: Reading/Speaking (20min) Grouping: 2 teams Materials: Large house floor plan, word cards, picture cards	Recycling of new vocabulary. Assessment.
2. Students listen to tape—movers bringing furniture into house and wife directing placement. Students listen and draw. Listen again. If necessary, listen to parts at a time. Students retell in pairs what they heard. Teacher elicits retell in large group. Add to drawing. Listen again to try to add more details. Skills: Listening/Speaking (30 min) Grouping: Individual/Pair/Large group	Listening comprehension of authentic speech. Recycling vocabulary and structures through different skills.
3. Students complete rating sheet showing what's important to them when looking for a place to live. At tables, students discuss what is important to them. Depending on level, can use "It's very important to me," or "It's important to me that it's not expensive." Skills: Reading/Speaking/ Listening (25 min) Grouping: Individual/Groups of 4 Materials: Rating sheet	Transition to new sub-unit Introduce vocabulary for finding/ renting housing. Group process. Student sharing.

Activity	Rationale
4. Brainstorm questions one could ask a landlord on the telephone about each of the factors on the rating sheet. Students work in pairs for 10 minutes, then bring back to whole group and make a list. Type and give list of questions to students. Skills: Speaking/Reading (20 min) Grouping: Whole group/ Pairs	Practice questions for getting information and evaluating housing. Practice with new vocabulary.
5. Give students a worksheet of housing ads. Students match abbreviations in the ads with words listed on the sheet. Discuss new vocabulary (utilities, references, lease etc.) Skills: Writing/Reading/Listening/Speaking (30 min) Grouping: Individual/Pairs Materials: Housing ad worksheet	Introduce abbreviations used in housing ads and housing vocabulary.
6. Homework—Worksheet. Read housing ads and answer questions. Skills: Reading/Writing Materials: Worksheet	Practice reading housing ads.
DAY 4	
1. Students work in pairs to find 1 apt/house that meets their needs and 1dream apt/house from the Vancouver classified ads. Write ads on butcher paper. Post on walls. Ask for volunteers to read their ads. Answer any vocabulary questions. Skills: Writing/Reading/Listening/Speaking (35 min) Grouping: Pairs Materials: 13 newspaper classified ad sections	Use authentic material. Practice reading and interpreting housing ads. Group process and student sharing.

Activity	Rationale
2. Dialogue—calling on telephone to ask information about advertised apt/house for rent. Listening comprehension exercise—Teacher asks students to listen for 3 questions the person asks the manager. Teacher reads the dialogue once. Pairs compare their questions. Then teacher elicits questions in the large group and writes on the board. Teacher asks students to listen for 3 more questions and reads again. Pairs compare and then questions are elicited from the large group and written on the board. Listen again for any more questions. Skills: Listening/Speaking (25 min) Grouping: Individual/Pairs/Whole group Materials: Dialogue	Practice listening first globally, then for details. Work collaboratively to extend understanding. Recycle vocabulary and structures through different skill.
3. Teacher hands out envelopes with sentences from the dialogue on strips. Pairs put dialogue in order. Pairs check pairs. Teacher reads one more time and students check their order. Skills: Reading/Listening (20 min) Grouping: Pairs Materials: Envelopes with sentence strips	Practice sequencing. Recycle vocabulary and structures through reading.
4. Human computer time to practice anything in dialogue, especially questions.	Practice different aspect of language—pronunciation. Raise awareness of sounds of language.
5. Teacher hands out dialogue card to each student. This includes information like # of bedrooms, bathrooms, price, w/d, pets ok, etc. Pairs take different roles and ask or answer questions on the telephone about apt/house for rent. Skills: Listening/Speaking (20m) Grouping: Outer and inner circle. Students move and talk to many people. Materials: Dialogue cards	Practice conversation—asking questions necessary to find new house/apt. Practice turn-taking in conversation.

Activity	Rationale
6. Homework—Worksheet with only answers from dialogue. Students write questions for the answers in the blanks. Skills: Reading/Writing	Recycle language through a different learning channel.
DAY 5	
1. Warm-up—Each student is given a housing ad. Each one of a pair takes turn with manager/renter role asking and answering questions. Skills: Reading/Speaking/Listening (15 min)	Recycle language Promote mastery Fluency
2. Teacher explains we'll be writing a story. Choices are: the house where I grew up, the neighborhood where I grew up, or a favorite place from childhood. First, we'll do a listening/speaking activity to brainstorm for our story. Teacher demonstrates Islamabad technique (see Appendix 4C) using rods to tell about the neighborhood where she grew up (favorite place). Students retell story and ask questions. Skills: Listening/Speaking (15 min) Grouping: Teacher sits at table which is part of a circle of students. Materials: Rods	Practice in listening comprehension. Give students example not only of physical description, but emotions. Build community through teacher sharing.
3. Student volunteer tells story with rods and full Islamabad technique is followed Skills: Listening/Speaking (10 min) Grouping and Materials: same as above	Listening comprehension practice. Provide example with student. Build community through student sharing.
4. In pairs, students use Islamabad technique to brainstorm for their stories. Skills: Listening/Speaking (20m) Grouping: Pairs Materials: Rods	Group process, community building. Generate details for story.

Activity	Rationale
5. Teacher uses her story to demonstrate on board how to write down details from their oral story (short phrases), i.e. so students understand they are not writing their composition at this point. Students write 20 minutes. Other students or teacher can help with any vocabulary/spelling needed. A composite list of new vocabulary is made on butcher paper. Skills: Writing Materials: Butcher paper	Drafts emphasize meaning, not form. Time to develop ideas and vocabulary.
6. Students write discovery draft in class. They can help each other, ask teacher questions, use a dictionary. Start with 30 minutes. Teacher doesn't circulate and correct errors, but if a student asks a direct question about structure or grammar, she works with them to find the answer. Skills: Writing Grouping: Individual/Group	Emphasis in drafts is on communicating meaning, not form. Time to develop ideas and vocabulary.
7. Teacher collects and checks discovery drafts. Comments focus on letting students know what was not clear or understandable. Also comments as interested reader and where she would like more information. In comments, may paraphrase an intended message to provide correct English.	The focus is on what students want to communicate and the audience
8. Feedback—Students sit in circle and each, in turn, answers any of the following questions. How did you feel about class this week? What helped you the most? What didn't help?	Helps to shift initiative to students for their learning. Valuable input to teacher.
PARTS OF FUTURE DAYS	
1. Students revise their draft in class or for homework, based on anything else they decided was important after reading teacher's comments. Group/teacher available for help. Skills: Writing Grouping: Individual/Group	Time to develop ideas and vocabulary.
2. Students complete activities designed to work on a few common grammar errors made by students in draft stories. Skills: Listening/Speaking/Reading/Writing Grouping: Individual/Pairs/Whole group	Focus on accuracy. Start where students are.

3. Editing of second draft. Students work in pairs with a grammar checklist to edit their stories. Checklist has grammar areas focused on in previous weeks. Skills: Listening/Speaking/Reading/Writing Grouping: Pairs	Focus on accuracy. Group process.

NEXT DAY AFTER STUDENT EDITING OF STORY:

Lesson: Teacher picks one student's composition to use as a reading activity or creates a new story from a composite of different students' stories. The reading activity follows the following process. (For example, describing the farm where a student grew up.)

Pre-reading Activities:

1. Write the word "farm" on the board. Students brainstorm words they associate with the word.
2. Put up butcher paper with key words from the story written on it. See which words are the same and which are new. Help students with any vocabulary questions.
3. Ask students what they think will be in the story considering the vocabulary.

Reading Activities:

1. Hand out copies of the story. Ask students to read the story once and turn their papers over when they are finished. Let them know they will be reading the story several times and the purpose of this reading is to get the general idea of the story.
2. Students work in pairs to retell what they remember from the story.
3. In the large group, students tell what they remember of the story and the teacher

makes a picture with rods. Teacher, in making sure she understands the students, counsels back their information, providing a correct model of the language.

4. Ask students to read the story again looking for new information, and turn their papers over when they are finished.
5. Students work in pairs to talk about new information they remember.
6. In the large group, students add new information and the teacher adds to the picture with rods. Teacher counsels students' responses.
7. Teacher asks if there were things in the story that they didn't understand. Students read again for that information. Bringing it back to the whole group, students see if someone in the class can help with the meaning. Teacher counsels their responses and adds to the picture with rods.

Post Reading Activities:

1. In groups of four, students publish their compositions by a version of the Islamabad technique. A student orally describes where they grew up or a favorite place from childhood while making a picture with rods. Let students know this activity is coming a day ahead, but let them have their composition in front of them if they need it. After they are finished, the other three students retell what they can remember from the story. Then students can ask the storyteller questions about his/her story. Each student takes a turn telling/making a picture of their story.
2. Students brainstorm nouns, adjectives etc. from their stories and teacher writes them on the board. Students write a cinquaine (poem) about their special place. Poems are illustrated/decorated, shared with their group and posted for class sharing.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY

> *"Success (for learners and teachers of language) depends less on materials, techniques and linguistic analyses, and more on what goes on inside and between the people in the classroom."*
>
> *Earl W. Stevick, Teaching Languages: A Way And Ways*

I still remember the chord the above quote struck with me in my first week at SIT. I think it's a principle that had always underlain my teaching, albeit unconsciously until then. To me, that is what this paper is really about—all the underlying principles I've come to and their application in the classroom that address "what goes on inside and between people."

These principles include the benefits of community, which provide a safe, accepting place for initiative, risk and mistakes. And, learning is facilitated with the increased self-esteem that comes from making contributions to and being accepted as part of a group. Another key is to promote engagement, initiative and community by inviting the whole person into the classroom by the use of student-generated materials.

There are also the small steps that cumulatively encourage the shift of initiative and responsibility onto the students for their own learning. Such steps include learning from each other, being able to communicate meaningful thoughts, studying topics that meet their needs and being asked for feedback.

"What goes on inside" students in a language classroom is various feelings that can get in the way of learning—fear, discouragement, being overwhelmed, boredom. I have also found it important to examine the materials when addressing these feelings. Activities need to be doable and students need to feel successful. Students need sufficient opportunity for practice, while remaining engaged. Becoming conscious of the benefits of using variety in the classroom to achieve these purposes was an important piece of my learning. It's the best way I've found to meet the realities of the ESL classroom with the students' different ages, learning rates, abilities, learning styles and needs.

An important result of this project for me personally, has been the practice in classroom research and reflective teaching that I have gained. With reflective teaching, I have found a vehicle that allows me to be continually engaged in my teaching and always be opening new doors to learning. Presently, I'm continuing my experiments on incorporating oral and written feedback into my classroom. My next project is to experiment with developing goal statements for my beginning students.

I have always had concern for my students' situations and a passion for helping them learn what is necessary to adjust to and thrive in their new lives. I have always felt connected to my students. However, an unexpected result of the changes in classroom activities and practices I've described in this paper is the strengthened connection I feel. I know them much better as individuals and as a group. The deeper connection I feel comes out every day in my teaching and in the atmosphere of the class. It is a cycle that enriches my life as well as benefits them.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Washington State Competencies

(Source: Washington State Basic Skills, Competency Indicators and Competencies, Office of Adult Literacy, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, June 1997)

LEVEL II
BEGINNING ESL

Goal: At the end of Level II (Beginning ESL), students will be able to: function with some difficulty in situations related to immediate needs; handle routine, entry-level jobs that involve only the most basic oral communication and in which all tasks can be demonstrated; communicate with great difficulty with native English speakers.

Listening and Observing Competencies:

1.0 Follow multi-step directions in a variety of situations (e.g., classroom, medical, safety, and work situations) and respond to simple requests.

2.0 Recognize the written symbols for sounds in English (e.g., consonant blends/ digraphs, short and long vowel sounds, and diphthongs).

3.0 Differentiate statements from questions based on grammatical structure and intonation patterns.

4.0 Follow simple rules or regulations presented orally.

Speaking Competencies:

1.0 Use sentences and culturally appropriate nonverbal behavior to express needs and wants.

2.0 Ask or respond to questions or make statements about the immediate situation.

3.0 Pronounce English consonants, vowels, and diphthongs in an understandable manner.

4.0 Initiate and maintain simple conversations using appropriate forms of address.

5.0 Use basic vocabulary and simple sentence structure to describe human characteristics and personality traits or objects in the environment or to report activities or facts about a situation.

Reading Competencies:

1.0 Recognize and interpret words and symbols on signs and warning labels.

2.0 Recognizing most standard words on personal information forms (e.g., "employment history," "education," "references," etc.).

3.0 Extract time and date information from documents (e.g., schedules, calendars, and correspondence).

4.0 Read and understand the vocabulary of the U.S. measurement system including measures for weight, volume, distance, and temperature.

5.0 Read simple statements and questions using context clues and sound/symbol relationships.

6.0 Read short passages and identify the main idea.

7.0 Locate a word, number, or item in a sequence and sort items according to alphanumeric order.

8.0 Identify common abbreviations and their corresponding long forms.

Writing Competencies:

1.0 Fill out personal information and other forms accurately and neatly (e.g., money orders, applications, and time cards).

2.0 Write three or four related sentences on a single topic.

APPENDIX 2

Community Building through Student-Generated Materials

2A Student-generated Sentences

2B Steps in Writing Process

2C Adapted Writing Process for Beginning Class

2D Student Writing Samples

2E Islamabad Technique

APPENDIX 2A
STUDENT GENERATED SENTENCES

YOUR SENTENCES!

Put in the correct form of the verb.

1. I (watch, not)_____TV in the evening because I don't have one.
2. She never (watch) _____TV.
She rarely (wash)_____the dishes, because her children often wash the dishes.
3. I never (cook)_____dinner because I can't cook. My wife always (cook) _____.
4. He (like)_____to sleep until noon every day.
5. I never (dream)_____in English because I only speak a little English.
6. I rarely (cook)_____dinner because my daughter (cook) _____dinner.
7. He often (go)_____fishing, but he rarely (catch)_____anything.
8. We (visit)_____our friends twice a week.
9. They (go)_____to English class 4 times a week.
10. I (study)_____English at home every day.
11. He (go)_____to the park with his children every other Friday.
12. We (go)_____to church every Sunday.
13. You (write)_____a letter to your friend in the Ukraine every Wednesday.
14. I (have)_____friends for dinner twice a month.
15. My wife, my son and I (go)_____to the park once a week.

YOUR SENTENCES!

Fill in the blanks with don't or doesn't.

1. I like my grandchildren, but I_____like it when they're noisy.
2. I go to college during the week, but I_____go there on the weekend.
3. We want to visit, but they_____invite us.
4. She likes to sing, but she_____sing well.
5. My wife says to me,_____go to school, but I go to school every day.
6. We speak English a little, but we_____speak English very well.
7. She likes to talk on the telephone, but she_____like to pay the bill.
8. You like Russia, but you _____ like communism.
9. She likes classical music, but she_____like rock music.
10. I like to put my children to bed at night, but I_____like to wake them up in the morning.

APPENDIX 2B

STEPS IN THE WRITING PROCESS

(As Presented in the Four Skills Class at SIT — Summer Masters of Teaching Program, 1998)

Brainstorming For topic • Free writing • Mapping • Lists Looping ↺	(Share aloud) What do you want to write about now? Why? ↺	**Discovery Draft** • What do I have to say about this topic? • What else can I say?	(Share aloud) What more does the reader need to know? How can a listener help as you continue to revise?	**Revising** • Audience • Purpose • Tone/voice • Eliminate unneeded (superfluous) material • Length • Word choice • Paragraphing • Lead • Transitions • Conclusion • Title	(Share aloud) How do you feel about this piece? How can the listener help you?	**Editing** • Word choice • Paragraphing • Title • Format • Capitalization • Punctuation • Spelling	(Share in writing) Proofread	**Publishing** • Send a letter or memo • Send piece to its subject • Give a piece to friends • Send away for publication
Brainstorming For detail • Free Writing • Mapping • Lists Looping ↺	(Share Aloud) What details can best tell what you want to say? (comm unicate) Why? ↺							

APPENDIX 2C

ADAPTATION OF WRITING PROCESS FOR BEGINNING ESL CLASS

Brainstorming for detail	**Students write 1st draft**	**Teacher reads and comments on draft**	**Revision of draft**	**Editing**	**Publish**
• List • Free write • Mapping • Double-entry journal • Islamabad technique Group/teacher available for help with vocabulary and spelling	Group/teacher available for help Composite list of new vocabulary is made	• Comments and suggestions focus on content • Comments on where the text is unclear or not understandable • Also comments as interested reader and where would like more information • May paraphrase the intended message and ask if understood correctly	Group/teacher available for help	• Give time in class to re-read and correct own mistakes • Grammar checklist (work individually or in pairs) • Read out loud to another student • Grammar activities with whole class on common errors	• Present story to group/class-mates • Bring/make pictures to illustrate story • Post story and pictures on bulletin board in classroom or in school hallway • Islamabad technique

Checklist For Students to Correct Their Own English

1. Does each sentence start with a **capital letter**?

2. Does each sentence have a **subject**?

3. Does each sentence have a **verb**?

4. Does each sentence end with **punctuation**?

5. Do all **singular** nouns have "a" or "the" before them?

6. When two verbs are together, is the second verb the infinitive? (like to go, like to **hike)**

7. When you list people, have you put yourself last? (My sister **and I**, My mother, my sister **and I**)

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APPENDIX 2D
STUDENT WRITING SAMPLES

Book Story	About you – what it makes you think about
Maria Gomez grew up in a small village	I grew up in a city.
She began school when she was six years old	I began school when I was 7 years old.
When Maria was seventeen years old, her family moved to the United States.	When I was 32 years old, my family moved to the United States.
Maria missed her friends in Peru.	I missed my friends in Moscow. I also missed Russian food.
She had to go to work when she was thirteen years old.	I had to go to work when I was 17 years old.

Mariya Gorbunov
Age: 35

Note on Process: A double-entry journal was used to brainstorm details for students' stories
Story was from Side by Side, Second Edition, Molinsky and Bliss, Prentice Hall Regents, 1989.

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1 Where + when you were born.

My Life

1. I was born in Kazakhstan in the city Krasnoarmeysk in 1964 year. When I was 4 years old my family moved to in the city of Dzhankoy in the Ukraine. There I first went to school, when I was 7 years old. When a was 15 years old, I graduated from school, and I went to college.

When I was 17 years old, I had first a jobs. I worked as a seamstress.

When I was 19 years old, I got married, and moved to in Russia the city Moscow, There I had five children. In 1996 my family and I moved to the U.S. in city Vancouver.

why did your family move from Kazakhstan to the Ukraine?

why did you move from the Ukraine to Moscow? what was different about life in the Ukraine and in Moscow?

why did you move to the U.S?

Mariya Gorbunov
Age: 35

Thanks for writing. You've lived in several different countries. Interesting!

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

My life.

I was born in the city Krasnoarmeysk in Kazahstan, in 1964. When I was 4 years old my family moved to in the city of Dzhankoy in the Ukraine, Because my family can't practice our religions. There I first went to school, When I was 7 years old. When I was 15 years old, I graduated from school, and I went to college. When I was 17 years old, I had first a jobs. I worked as a seamstress. When I was 19 years old, I got married, and moved to the city of Moscow in Russia, because my husband liaved in Moscow.
Dzhankay is the small town and Moscow is the huge one. But, when I moved to Moscow I missed my friends. But after I had alot friend in Moscow.
There I had five children. In 1996 my family and I moved to the U.S. in city Vancouver, because there is religious freedom in the U.S.

Mariya Gorbunov
Age: 35

Now this story is more complete. You did a good job! A very interesting story

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Nikolayeva
Age: 61

I was born in 1938 years.
I'm from Kazakhstan, city Shimkent.
I finished High School.
When I was 18 years old, I began to ~~work~~ →
What was your job? a seamstress? I liked my job. I like to sew.
I got married in 1960
How was life in Kazakhstan? easy? difficult? I had the first daughter in 1962
I have six children.
I Love my children.
I loved my job also.
→ My family and I live in Vancouver 1 year. 2 mounts
Why did you move to Vancouver? → The Vancouver beautiful city.
Do all your six children + families live in U.S.? In Vancouver?

It was very interesting to read your story

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Nikolayeva
Age: 61

I'm from Kazakhstan, city Shimkent.
I was born in April 18, 1938.
I was the ninth baby in my family.
My family was big and poor.
I began to study when I was seven years old. I worked after my school in village garden.
I finished High School.
When I was 18 years old, I began work in the factory.
I was sewing clothes for people.
I worked hard and people love my clothes. Many people said my „thanks".
I got married in 1960.
I am having six children.
I love my children, I loved my job also.
Now in Kazakhstan live very difficult. No job, no money, no electric light.
My family and I moved in the U.S. in 1997.
Three my children live with me in apartment.
Three children live in Russia.
The Vancouver beautiful city.
My sons are studing in High School.
My daugther is working now.

Vera -
You did a great job.
What an interesting story.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Yekaterina
Age: 40

me		My sister
look alike	same	look alike
have family		has family
have one daughter		has one daughter
live in Vancouver		live in Vancouver
like hiking		like hiking
	different	
I, m tall		she's short
I, m 56 age		She's 49age
I have light eyes		She has brown eyes
Four children		Three children
Go to eat out		invites visiters
go to camping		Stays at home
to read		to sing
little heavy		average weight
go to College		goes work
go to American church		goes to Russian church

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

I'm Yekaterina and my sister Larisa both look alike. We both have family. We each have one daughter. We live in Vancouver on the one Avenue. We love to God in Jesus christ We love read a Bible. We like go to the camping We like nature and live in America

That must be nice to have your sister in the same city

I'm tall but she is short. I'm 56 age, she is 49 age. I have the light eyes, she has the brown eyes. I like go to eat out restorant, she likes invided visitors. I'm like camping. She likes stays at home. I like to read, she likes to sing and play niano. I'm going to College, she is going to work. I have two sons, two daughter-in-law and one son-in-law. She doesn't have children-in-law. She has more two sons. She likes new clothes.

Here it sounds like she likes camping. Here it sounds like she doesn't like camping which is true

I don't understand. You have 3 sons, right? No daughters? But you say you have a son-in-law

Do you mean grandchildren?

She has more than 2 sons?? 3, or 4?

Please write some more - what is her personality? your personality? The same or different?

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Yekaterina Age: 40

My sister and I are both married
We both are looking alike we live in Vancouver
My sister has one daughter and I have one daughter to
My sister and I have one brother and one
sister. Them lives in Vancouver with their
famalies We both like to cook Russian food.
We both teache learn? an English language.
We both like to hike throut a forest. We both like brother in
to live in the United States of America. We both Vancouver
like nature in our areas. right?

So - you have 2 sisters and a

It sounds like you and your sister like many of the same things.

My sister is short height and little slim
I am tall height and heavy weight.
My sister has brown eyes, I have blue eyes
My sister has 3 children. I have four children.
My sister go to work. I go only to College.
My sister likes new clothes. My sister likes
to movied. to see movies?
likes to move??

Nice writing. enjoyed reading about you & your sister.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

My sister and me

My sister is tall. I'm short. My sister has light brown hair. I have brown hair. My sister and me little look like. My sister always joyful, I is say. My sister have blue eyes. She look likes a father, I look likes a mother. She is live in Ukraine. She has two daughter, and three grandchildrem.
I always at sister griere. I want to drive to her.
I her very vivy like.

Do you mean ? I miss my sister ?

Do you mean ? You like her very much ??

Anna Mistark
Age: 66

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

My sister and me. Anna Illishuk Age: 66

My sister and me defferent. She has light brown hair, blue eyes. I have brown hair, brow eyes.
My sister is tall, I short.
My sister always joyful, I sad.
She look likes a father, I look likes a mother.
She is live in Unraine. She has two daughter and three grandchildren. She has two grand-grand. children-twins. Dima and Tomila.
I have 2 sons, and 13 grandchildren.
I always think about my sister, because I love her very-very.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

APPENDIX 2E
ISLAMABAD TECHNIQUE
USING RODS TO TELL STUDENT-GENERATED STORIES
Instructions for Teachers

Procedure	Purpose/Rationale
1. The storyteller describes his/her place to the teacher using rods to make a picture. It should be a place that no one else in the room knows.	The idea is that the storyteller focuses on the rods, becomes absorbed in communicating the story, which promotes fluency. Insures genuine communication Makes storyteller the "authority".
2. The teacher repeats back what the storyteller says, in summary form, every few sentences. The teacher uses understanding (counseling) responses to "correct" linguistic errors. For beginning students, response follows form of storyteller's sentence closely. For more advanced students, response is more flexible, can be summary.	Teacher is there to provide support/ security to storyteller. Role of teacher is interested conversationalist. Provides correct model of language. Otherwise, response will be confusing. Otherwise, response will be monotonous.
3. The rest of the students watch and listen, remaining silent until the storyteller is finished.	Rods concentrate attention of listeners. Provides visual to help listeners comprehend story.
Optional step: Teacher retells the whole story. It's often helpful to point to the rods while talking.	*Allows listeners to hear language again. Students hear fluent, natural speech.*
4. Listeners take turns retelling what they remember from the story.	Shows storyteller they heard him / her. Active listening validates storyteller.
5. The teacher uses understanding responses to "correct" linguistic errors of listeners.	Teacher is there to provide support/ security to listeners. Provide correct model of language.
6. The listeners stay with the teller's story. No statements or questions about other places are allowed.	
7. Listeners ask questions about the teller's story.	Shows storyteller they are interested. Validates storyteller.
(The Islamabad Technique was originated by Earl Stevick and described in his book *Teaching Languages: A Way and Ways*, Heinle and Heinle Publishers, 1980.	

USING RODS TO TELL STUDENT STORIES

DIRECTIONS FOR STUDENTS

1. Describe a place. It should be a place that no other student in the classroom knows.

2. As you speak, use rods to make a "picture" of your place.

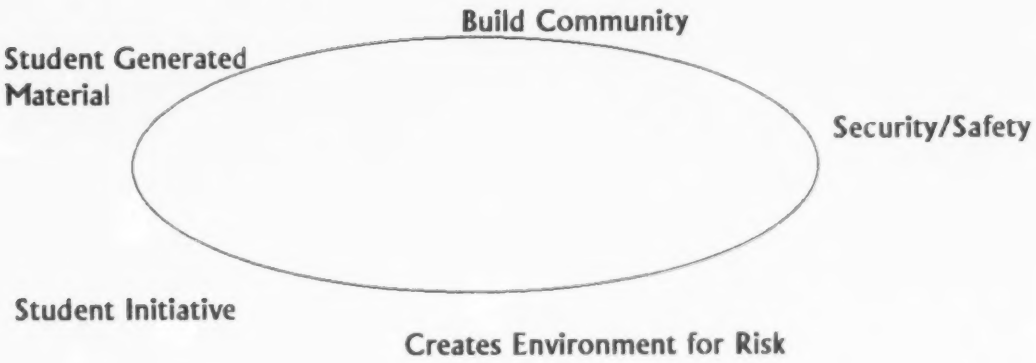
3. I will listen and sometimes repeat what you say, to make sure that I understand.

4. All the other students will watch and listen silently, until you are finished.

5. Then, the listeners will repeat what they remember about the place you described. (Listeners can't talk about any other place.) I will listen and sometimes repeat what the listeners say, to make sure I understand.

6. Last, the listeners can ask questions about the place you described. I will listen and sometimes repeat, to make sure I understand the question.

BENEFITS OF THE ISLAMABAD TECHNIQUE



- Invites Whole Person into the Classroom
- Creates Awareness and Knowledge of Other Students' Cultures and Backgrounds

APPLICATIONS

- can describe anything spatial
- listening comprehension
- grammar practice
- cultural awareness
- brain storming for process writing
- publishing for process writing
- make reading activity from one student's story
- assessment
- material for dictation
- information gap activity
- giving directions

ISLAMABAD TECHNIQUE
STUDENT-GENERATED STORIES

PLACES TO DESCRIBE

- a favorite place from childhood
- the city/village where I grew up
- the neighborhood where I grew up
- the house where I grew up
- my favorite room (now or in the past)
- a place that was important to me in the past
- a favorite place my parents used to take me
- the school I went to
- the place where I got married
- a place my family likes to go together
- a place that is special to me now
- the best place I went on vacation
- the worst place I went on vacation
- _____
- _____
- _____

Islamabad Technique
Examples of Counseling Response

Shigeo is talking to Pat about a favorite place from his childhood. He is talking about a vacant field near his home where many of the neighborhood children went after school to play baseball. His favorite part of the story, though, is when he is telling me about the storyteller who came to the field every afternoon to entertain the children.

S: So we know everybody's children. We don't talk about when time to come together. Don't say anything about, but after finished school, go together. Everybody together, same place and play until it's getting dark.

P: So, in your neighborhood when you were a child, the parents knew everyone else's children.
S: Yes.
P: You didn't make plans to meet. Everyone just knew where to go and you played until it got dark.

S: Yes. Every afternoon about 3 or 4 o'clock, a old man bring some card play.

P: He brought some cards?

S: Very big one and there's a picture. Old man knows how to play describe them about the picture - to show for children about the story.

P: Tell me more about the pictures. I don't understand yet.

S: Some picture, every story. Old man describing what the picture is and a lot of stories.

P: Like folk stories?

S: Adventure story. The old man is a professional storyteller. We are very excited about the things on the cards. So when I leave my house, our parents give us a small coin. Then we are prepared for this play.

P: So your parents gave you a little bit of money each day because they knew the storyteller would come. You were very excited to hear the stories.

S: Yes. That's a good memory.

APPENDIX 3

Student Survey

APPENDIX 3
STUDENT SURVEY

NAME ———————————— AGE————————

How many months/years did you study English in your native country? _____

How many months/years have you studied English in the United States? _____

Job in your native country _____

People study English for different reasons. At this time, what is your major reason for studying English?

_____ learn English to get my first job
_____ I am working now. Learn English for a better job
_____ to go to college to study a job/profession
_____ need English for everyday living. I stay home with my family
_____ need English for everyday living. I am retired (pension)
_____ other (please write) _____

_____

What problems do you have speaking English?

People you need to speak to: _____

_____

_____

Where do you need to use English? _____

_____

_____

I want to study: _____

_____

_____

APPENDIX 4

Using Variety in the Classroom

4A Excerpt From On-line Journal

4B Possibilities for Variety in One Story

APPENDIX 4A

EXCERPTS FROM MY ON-LINE JOURNAL

LEARNING THE BENEFITS OF VARIETY

(Excerpts from Pat Kubala's on-line journal on Meta Network. She is in conversation with her IYTP advisor Jack Millet, Faculty, SIT.)

Journal Entry: January 30, 1998

Activity: Working with an Action English picture story to review present continuous tense.

Pat: I continued work on providing variety within an activity to provide the recycling needed for lower level students while holding the attention of more advanced students. I continued experimenting with suggestions made during supervision week. I broke the story in half and had pairs write sentences for the first half. My intent was to work with a smaller chunk , but through writing, engage the more advanced students, with the less advanced being paired for help if need be. All students were engaged writing the story and it was doable.

Jack: *In the initial pairs, could you note what the less advanced students were doing? Were they holding their own or was the more advanced partner doing most of the work? Did you reflect on why you thought this activity worked? What are your insights into why writing might be a skill area where both groups can stay engaged?*

Pat: I saw the less advanced students contributing words they knew, looking up words in their notebooks they knew they had had, but couldn't remember. They were generally not scribing the sentences, but contributing. Writing will better engage the more advanced students as they are working with skills in vocabulary, word order, article and preposition use and spelling. The less advanced students are able to contribute and had the language recycled again.

Each pair put a sentence on the board and we corrected them together. We used an overhead to tell a couple frames of the story, then recycled to the beginning etc.

The next day, I reviewed the first half of the story with an overhead, again building slowly with much recycling. We had written and practiced this part yesterday so all students were participating helping tell the story.

Jack: *In your review of the first part of the story on the next day, did you think about why people were engaged? Why weren't the more advanced students bored? What are you learning about this type of recycling activity. What makes*

it work? What leads into difficulties? Any reflection on these elements can serve you in designing future activities that might be seemingly quite different.

Pat: It was first thing in the morning. They had been away from the material for 24 hours. I always have students close their notebooks when reviewing a story. They hadn't mastered the language after only working with it for one day. It was a challenge even for the more advanced students to retell the story, even though they remembered more of it.

Then we switched to pair work practicing telling the story. I noticed all students were practicing and engaged.

To do the second half of the story differently, I switched to a reading activity. Students matched mixed up sentences with pictures of the story. I again noticed all the students working and engaged.

***Jack:** Keep thinking about why the reading activity for the second part worked. What kept them engaged?*

Pat: We didn't do the second half of the story yesterday. So it was new language, a switch in grouping from pairs to individuals, and a change in skills from speaking to reading. All of these things helped to engage the students.

After matching, I went back to the overhead to recycle the second half of the story. The energy seemed to be going down – I noticed not as many participating. Maybe they were not as familiar with this half? Maybe using the overhead was too much of the same thing? I noticed they were more engaged when they broke into pairs and practiced the second half.

***Jack:** Keep exploring why the recycling on the overhead didn't work. Any insight will serve you in designing other activities. It does seem that you were able to shift to pairs and pick up the energy. This is a clear indication you are tuning to their energy. As you keep refining your skills in tuning to energy, you will more and more see that an activity is your best guess for that moment and that the art of teaching is being ready to adjust the activity/or student participation (behavior) to the energy you see in the moment.*

Pat: As I circulated, students asked for help in discriminating "think, thing, sing." At the end of pair work, it worked for a shift of activity to work on sound production and discrimination of these sounds.

Then, we worked on making questions about the story. I elicited questions from the group for a couple frames, then let pairs do the next few, then brought it back to the whole group. Then, pairs worked asking and answering questions. Questions were brought back to the group at the end. There was good participation.

This was about a 1¼-hour block of activities. We switched to a different topic the rest of class.

At this point, what do I think and notice about trying things this way? I do think working with half the story at a time was a more doable chunk for the less advanced students. I'm getting a bit more comfortable that this amount of recycling is necessary. It is confirmed as I go around and listen to pairs and still hear difficulty in making the sentences. I do think the mix of skills and groupings helped keep interest.

Journal Entry: February 4, 1998

Activity: Review of a past tense picture story.

Pat: Continuing with working on variety to help lower level students while engaging higher level students.

Hand out 1st half of story with each sentence having scrambled word order

After students are finished, use overhead to practice, go back, build up first half of story

Pull out pronunciation problems and work on

Students in pairs, tell story to each other

Jack: *You have variety by starting with reading and writing (unscrambling is a writing activity) and then to speaking in the whole group looking at one common picture story. I assume they worked in pairs to unscramble sentences so you also have a variety in the groupings (pair to whole group). You move to sounds and then to a freer practice of telling the story. Seems you have provided variety on five different levels to this point. Doing this very consciously can be very powerful.*

Pat: 5. Hand out second half of story - with whole sentences in mixed up order. Students match to picture. Then follow 2,3,4 above.

Jack: *Here you have new language and a reading matching activity which is another variation. Again this should go a long way in engaging all the students.*

Pat: 6. Hand out the written story.

Elicit how to make a question for the 1st sentence. All students write a question for the 2nd sentence, then bring back to the group. Put up examples of verb "to be" and other past tense verbs.

After, all students write questions for several sentences and then bring back to the group to check. Then students write a question for remaining sentences.
This was a 1-hour, 10-min. chunk of time, then we switched topics for the rest of class.

Jack: *This is again quite a different way to work with basically the same language. I sense this should work quite well.*

Pat: With the first half of the story (scrambled word order of each sentence), what I noticed as I circulated, was this was a more difficult activity for all students than other ways I've used to review in the past. This is based on their slowness in completing it and number of errors. I also got more information (or confirmation) about which students have trouble with basic word order.

This contrasted with the second half of the story (mixing up the order of sentences). I noticed all students were engaged (working, not talking), but it was easier for all students. They completed it faster with few errors. This gives me information about what activities might be good at different times for the future. (bored higher level or confused lower level) And presently having a mix of levels, there was something for everyone.

Jack: *Here you are gaining insight into tuning to the energy/learning of the students. If you have a wide variety of activities working with the same language and you understand what the activity asks of students, you increase your chances of really being in tune with students.*

Pat: I've noticed I've also adopted a more structured beginning to many activities such as today's question writing about the story. I notice I am giving them more direction and help before they start a freer practice. I took your suggestion for more teacher control and had pairs write a question, bring it back to the whole group, pairs write a couple more questions, then bring it back to the whole group before turning them loose to write on their own. Today I found I had less individual teaching and correction to do as I circulated around the room.

Jack: *Pat, this whole entry seems on target. I think you have the essence of what needs to happen to keep different levels of students working productively in a class. As you go forward, keep in mind that at times you may have to temporarily lose one of the groups in order to fully serve another group. As long as you are aware of this and you draw the other group back in, the class will work.*

Journal Entry - March 4, 1998

Pat: I used individual writing boards and markers and did a random dictation of sentences from a picture story we had been working with for a couple days.

When Jack visited, he suggested I use more dictation and said he's never known students not to like it. I told him spelling is really difficult for these beginning students (99% Russian using Cyrillic alphabet), and it makes them feel that they can't write at all.

But I've been experimenting with dictation this term, and today I was surprised that more than half of the students made few errors. As the writing on the individual boards is large and easily seen, it's easy to observe accuracy and where listening comprehension is low. I have observed that spelling of simple words we

use frequently has improved. Reflecting on some of the reasons for this, I think the extra amount of recycling using more variety (especially adding more reading and writing activities) has helped. Also I am probably stating the importance of listening and spelling to the students when I use dictation, so they notice it more.

Jack: *The activities you are doing with reading and writing do give them a clear message that you are interested in all aspects of these skill areas. I think that students in general like to be as accurate as possible and the dictation work provides them a learning space to work on accuracy in spelling just as when you stop to look at pronunciation you create a space for focusing on the sound system. It can be quite helpful to think about all the aspects of each piece of language and check to see if you have provided space for students to work in each area. By doing this you provide lots of variety in any lesson.*

Journal Entry — April 26, 1998

Pat: What Jack wrote in his responses to previous entries are all starting to make sense to me in a new way. You work on pronunciation/stress/intonation a little bit all the time, within the real language of the lessons you are doing, based on the ongoing feedback you get in class every day on their needs. I'm doing a unit on health and within that unit we're working on present tense, pronunciation/stress/intonation.

In the future: Keep trying different ways of working on stress/intonation/pronunciation a little bit all the time so it becomes an integrated part of my teaching.

Jack: *I think you've got it. As the sound system becomes an integral part of any work you do with language, you begin to get insight into how best to work with students. Working a little bit all the times with sounds brings variety into your lesson just as shifting from reading to writing to listening to speaking does. Doing lots with a little and keeping energy focused are critical.*

Journal Entry — May 13, 1998

Activity: Review of past tense picture story. Unscramble 10 questions about the story, then write the answers.

Pat: As I circulated, I was aware of who was working faster/slower. I observed even the top 2 students were working hard to figure out the questions and answers. The lower level students were able to do the work on their own, but slowly.

Jack: *Note that through this observation you become very aware of the doability of the task for different learners. This gives you invaluable information for adjusting the activity to make it more or less challenging. Keep reflecting on how you can get this kind of information all the time.*

Pat: From observing their mistakes, I saw part of the challenge was that I hadn't written one question per picture as in the past, but they were general questions about the story and they had to really understand the question and story. The words were not right below the picture.

Jack: *Here you can reflect on why this challenge was right or not. You can also note that you have simple ways to make the activity more doable by linking questions to the pictures. Having this insight helps in the future in adjusting activities in the moment. This is a critical part of tuning to the learning of the students.*

Pat: The other thing I noticed in their written mistakes was that they changed the order of the subject and verb in "did" questions, confusing them with was/were questions.

To address the confusion, when we went over the paper, I elicited information about "to be" and wrote it on one side of the board, then on the pattern for all other verbs and wrote it on the other side of the board. As we corrected, a student identified the verb and pointed to the appropriate side of the board.

Jack: *By observing carefully you get information that helps them work on the immediate problems as they arise. Your framework helps them sort the different types of questions. Keep in mind that you need to keep coming back to this work with question formation — doing a little bit all the time.*

Pat: What I learned: Because I was circulating and thinking about what I saw, I got some information I can use in the future to engage higher level students-the type of questions that are more challenging. I also got some feedback that the rod work/practice with past tense questions we did the day before was probably confusing to some and that I need to follow up with more practice in future days.

Jack: *Both of these insights are extremely valuable. Note that your insight into how to engage higher level students also connects to how to engage lower level students.*

By continuing to assess the effectiveness of yesterdays activity in terms of what you saw in this lesson you really tune to the learning of the students and move away from the assumption that they learned because they went through an activity.

Journal Entry — May 15, 1998

Activity — A four-part story (like a mini-soap opera)

Pat: The purpose of the stories is to build listening comprehension and vocabulary and give practice with past tense, especially irregular verbs.

I read the 1st part of the story twice, the first time just reading, the second time acting it out as I read it. Then I read a couple of sentences at a time and the students worked sometimes in pairs, sometimes individually to retell the story.

Through the process as it was elicited, I wrote it on the board.

Then I read it and acted it out again. I erased all the verbs, and the students practiced the story in pairs.

Then students wrote questions about the story, both was/were and did. After, they orally asked and answered questions about the story in pairs. Lastly, they completed a cloze activity.

Jack: *I'm struck with just how much opportunity you are giving these students to integrate the language you are putting in front of them. I'm sure some teachers would look at this series of activities and say how boring. What strikes me is that students are working with the same language but in different ways. The engagement stays because of the shifts in focus.*

Pat: Observations: During the 1st reading, I noticed certain students laughing and responding to the text. This was feedback that their listening comprehension is good enough that they understood with no aids (gestures, acting) in meaning. Other students responded when the acting was added. I was aware that the students, as a group, were engaged helping me retell the story.

When my back was turned erasing the verbs, I heard some "no's" and "oh no's". I didn't know if they were telling me that I hadn't given them enough practice yet. But as I circulated, I heard the pairs of students telling the story and able to fill in the verbs.

Jack: *Note that here you get very clear evidence of what they can do and can't do. This is critical in taking the right next steps.*

Pat: So I didn't adjust the activity. (They might have thought it was dialogue erasure-like activity)

During the question writing activity, I circulated and saw that every student could make both types of questions (marked progress over last week).

Journal Entry — May 22, 1998

Pat: In this entry I thought I'd describe an instance this week where I changed or added to something I was doing based on reflecting about the feedback I was receiving.

Jack: *This awareness that you are changing/adding because of feedback and reflection is a key insight. Growth in teaching comes from really tuning to the messages students are sending you and you are sending students. To develop this skill, you also need to keep working on yourself so that you can stay open*

and present and be ready to adjust when you notice that you aren't open and present.

Pat: The activity was a continuation of the 4-part past tense story I mentioned last entry. After I read the second part of the story twice yesterday, I noticed several main students helping me to retell the story. I didn't know if the others could understand a little, a lot or what.

So after thinking about it, today for part 3 I tried a couple of things Jack mentioned during his visit. Instead of the whole group retelling the story, students in pairs said sentences or words they remembered, then I brought it back to the whole group. This involved all the students more.

Then after doing part of the story that way, I switched to dictation where they wrote on individual boards. I could easily see their writing on the board, so I got a lot of information this way. They were all getting a good portion of the story. Noticing what they heard and didn't hear led right into a review of sentence stress and reduced vowels.

Jack: *You describe what needs to happen. You put forward an activity that you think will work. You watch to see what happens and then you start adjusting. This adjusting can only happen when you have several alternatives to move to. This willingness to watch and adjust is a critical piece of letting the learning tell you how to teach. I find that once you really get this insight your teaching becomes dynamic and enriching for you and students.*

APPENDIX 4B
POSSIBILITIES FOR VARIETY WITH ONE STORY

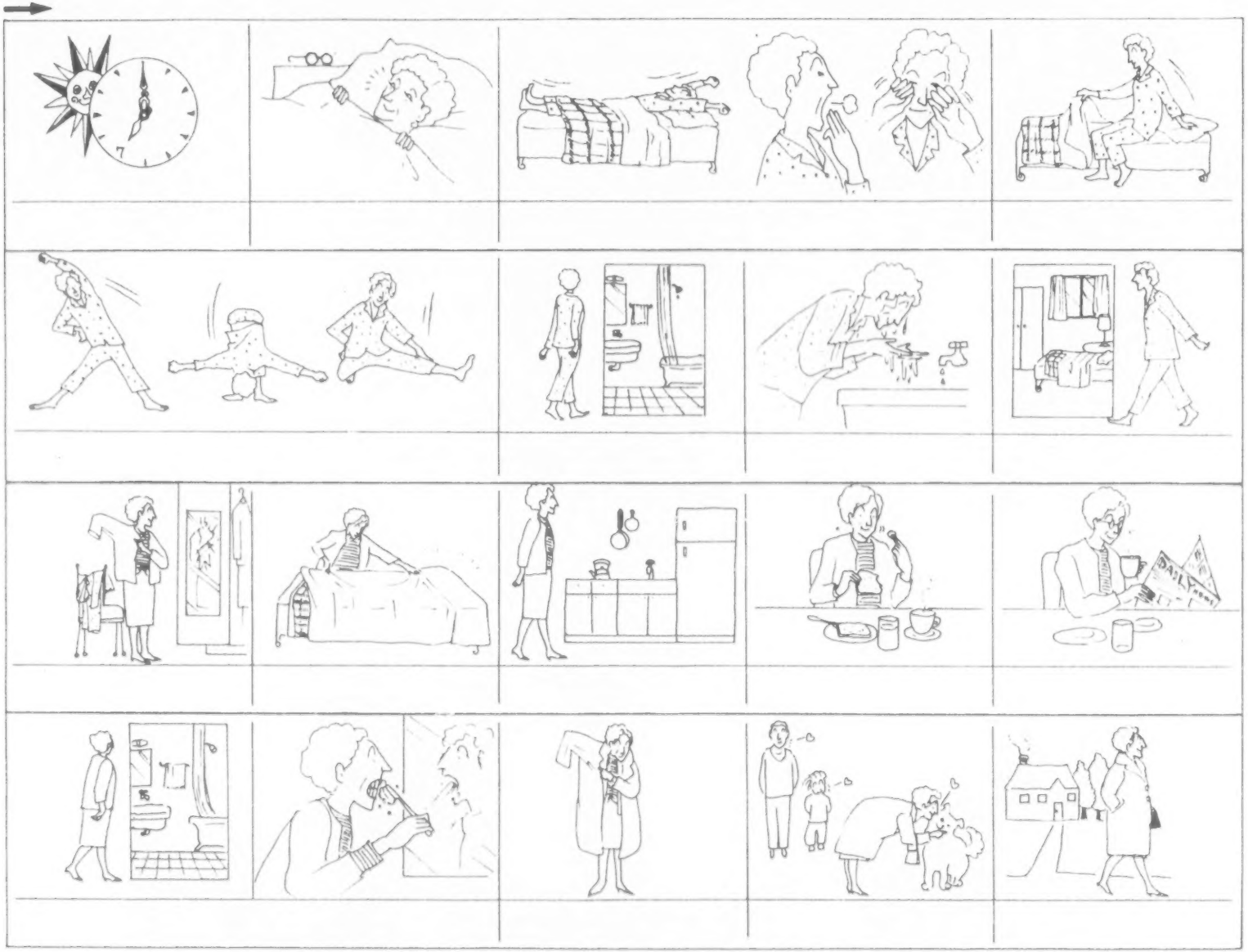
Picture Story—"Good Morning" (from Action English Pictures, Takahashi and Frauman-Prickel, Regents/Prentice Hall 1985)

Activities to introduce the story

Skill	(Listening (L), Speaking (S), Reading (R), Writing (W)
W,S	Give the picture story to students. Pairs write a sentence for each picture. Each pair puts a sentence from the story on the board. Correct the sentences together.
S	Cut up the picture story (each picture separately or in blocks). In twos or threes, students put the story together in sequence and develop a story. Compare different stories with the whole class.
L,S	Use as a listening comprehension exercise. (Don't hand out the pictures.) Tell the story or part of the story. In pairs, students tell each other actions or words they remember from the story. Elicit remembered sentences/ words from the whole group. Reconstruct story together. Students listen to the story again for more details. Repeat the same steps above. Variation: Teacher listens to students' sentences and builds the story with rods.
L,S, W	Hand out sentence strips with a few sentences from the story that make a storyline to each pair of students. Students listen to the story and put the sentence strips in order. Pairs check pairs. Elicit other details and reconstruct the story. Variation: Could start the activity as a dictation. Dictate a few sentences from the story which students write on sentence strips. Continue the activity as above.
L,S	Hand out or have students make a graphic organizer for the story. Read the story. Ask students to listen for and write two things she does in the bedroom, two things in the kitchen and two things in the bathroom. Pairs check pairs. Bring to the whole group, elicit more details, and reconstruct the story.
L,W, R	Hand out the picture story. Dictate sentences in random order. After writing, students match the sentences with pictures.

Activities to practice the story

Skill	(Listening (L), Speaking (S), Reading (R), Writing (W)
S	Only using the pictures (no written materials), students, in pairs, tell the story to each other.
S	Using an overhead of the pictures, do an oral cloze with the whole class.
R	Hand out written sheet with story sentences in random order. Students match sentences with picture.
R,W	Hand out written sheet with scrambled sentences from the story (sentences could be in order or in random order). Students unscramble the sentences and match with the pictures.
R,W	Hand out written sheet with scrambled questions about the story. Students unscramble the questions, then write an answer.
W	Students complete written cloze exercise of the story.
S	Charades—Student acts out a picture from the story. Teammates provide a sentence.
S	Game Board—In groups of three or four, students roll dice and move that many spaces. Student makes a sentence for the picture. Variation: Then each group member asks that student a question about his picture.
R,S	Concentration game—Picture cards and sentence cards are turned face down in rows on table. Students try to remember where cards are and make matches. Students must make a sentence for each card turned over.
S	Pictionary—Student draws a representation of an action from the story on the board. Teammates guess the sentence within a time limit.
S	Do a short pronunciation lesson based on problems identified through ongoing feedback.
S	Do a short stress or intonation lesson based on problems identified through ongoing feedback.
L,W	Dictation of sentences from the story.



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